

Eucalypts: a celebration

by John Wrigley and Murray Fagg

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It is important to note the subtitle of this book. Without it, one might imagine that this is another book which just describes and illustrates many of the 700-plus species of eucalypts.

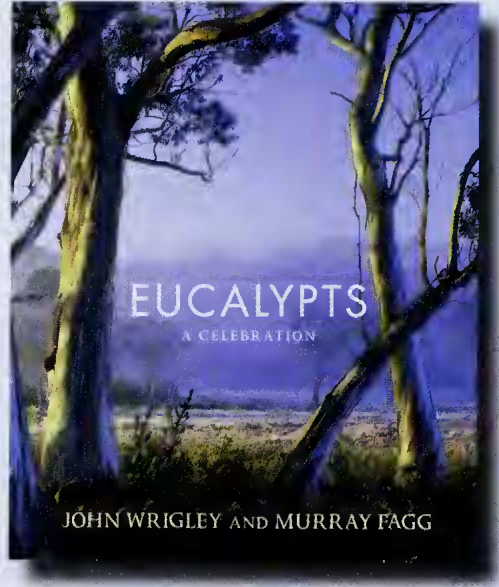
However, in its 340 pages with beautiful photographs, the book looks at eucalypts from every conceivable angle. The cover blurb sums it up very well:

This book celebrates their diversity, their beauty and the role they play in our history, culture and economy. It looks at their evolution, biology, horticulture and ecology, together with their classification and the botanists involved. Through historic and contemporary images, it examines the many ways in which they have served Aboriginal, colonial and contemporary Australians in both practical and aesthetic ways.

It does this in six parts and 38 special-focus chapters—far too many to list here. In addition, there is a checklist of 758 species plus 151 subspecies listing information under the headings: naming author(s), date described, geographical occurrence, tree size, flower colour, and the meaning of the name—this appendix is a valuable reference resource in itself. By the way, it should be noted that the general term ‘eucalypts’ includes the three genera *Angophora*, *Corymbia* and *Eucalyptus*, and all are dealt with in the book.

This is not the sort of book that you attempt to read from cover to cover. You can dip into any chapter and find fascinating, thoroughly-researched and well-illustrated information on many diverse aspects, for example: eucalypts as wildlife habitat, botanists who named eucalypts, eucalypts in wartime, managing pests and diseases, timber crafts, dyes, eucalypts overseas, eucalypts in advertising, eucalypts and children, eucalypts in Australian literature, and much more.

One reference under Significant Individual Eucalypts will be close to the hearts of Victorian bush-lovers. It reminds us that, along with the human casualties of the 2009 Black Satur-



day fires, there was the loss of the whole Mt Disappointment forest of giant Mountain Ash *Eucalyptus regnans*, including Big Ash One which stood at 92.4 metres in Kinglake National Park. Mountain Ash regenerates only from seed, so it will be several human generations before such trees can again be seen in that forest.

I found this book absorbing and easy reading, with clear detail where it was needed. It has been very well written, designed and edited, its taxonomy is up-to-date, and I haven't noticed any errors. It can give hours of reading pleasure to anyone—not just botanists. I wholeheartedly recommend it.

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